

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Fish listing

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

Little Chucky Creek flows through scenic farmland of eastern Tennessee. Looking at it, you would never guess it's the only place in the world where a tiny catfish, the Chucky madtom, lives. In fact, in the past 11 years, only three individuals have been found. Come September 8th, the madtom and three other Appalachian fish will be placed on the federal endangered species list.

The listing includes the Cumberland darter, which is only found in the upper Cumberland River system in Kentucky and Tennessee where it survives in short stretches of 12 streams; the rush darter, found in three north Alabama watersheds; and the laurel dace found in six streams in the Cumberland Plateau of Tennessee.

Populations of these fishes have long been in decline due to changes in their stream habitats resulting from mining, agriculture, reservoir construction, channelization, urban sprawl, pollution, sedimentation, and incompatible forestry practices.

The Southeastern United States is home to some of the greatest aquatic biodiversity in the temperate world. Unfortunately, much of that diversity, including fish and mussels, is imperiled. For the Southern Appalachians, hopefully the listing of these four species will serve to give people pause to ponder the condition of streams in their community, where they fish, swim, boat, and where their drinking water comes from.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.